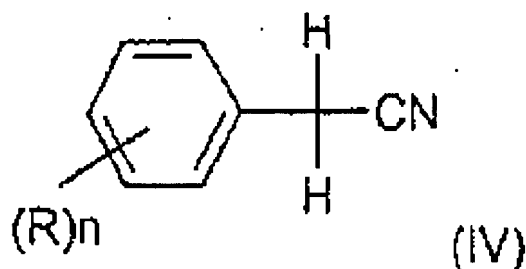


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-10. (Cancelled)

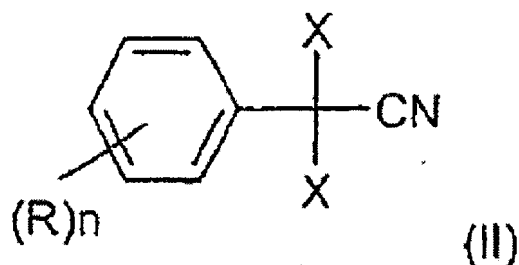
11. (New) A process for preparing alkyl, 2,2-dichloro-phenylacetates of the formula (I),
wherein

in a first stage, reacting an optionally substituted benzyl cyanide of the formula



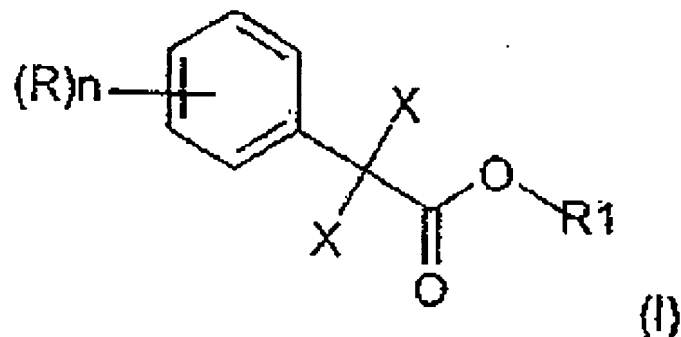
in which n may be an integer from 1 to 5 and R is hydrogen, C₁-C₈-alkyl, aryl, heteroaryl, C₁-C₈-alkoxy, aryloxy or halogen,

with chlorine in the presence of catalytic amounts of hydrogen chloride gas, to give the corresponding nitrile of the formula



in which n and R are each as defined above and X is Cl, and HCl offgas

and in a second stage, using the HCl offgas to convert the nitrile of the formula (II) to the corresponding alkyl 2,2-dichloro-phenylacetate of the formula



in which X, n and R are each as defined above and R1 is C₁-C₈-alkyl,

the conversion to the corresponding alkyl 2,2-dichloro-phenylacetate of the formula (I) in the second stage being effected in from 0.8 to 2 mol of water per mole of nitrile of the formula (II), from 1 to 8 mol of alcohol of the formula



in which R1 is as defined above, per mole of nitrile of the formula (II) and

with from 1 to 3 moles of HCl in the form of the offgas from the first stage per mole of nitrile of the formula (II), optionally in the presence of a solvent inert under the reaction conditions, and the reaction temperature in the first phase of the conversion being from 30 to 60 °C and, in the second phase, from 60 to 100 °C,

whereupon, on completion of conversion, cooling the reaction mixture to from 20 to 40 °C, diluting with water, and isolating the corresponding alkyl 2,2-dichloro-phenylacetate of the formula (I).

12. (New) The process of claim 11, wherein in the formula (I), R is hydrogen, C₁-C₄-alkyl, C₁-C₄-alkoxy, phenyl, phenoxy, fluorine, bromine or iodine, and n, if R is not hydrogen, is an integer from 1 to 3.

13. (New) The process of claim 11, wherein the alcohol of the formula (III) used is methanol, ethanol, or n-butanol.

14. (New) The process of claim 11, wherein in the case that the alcohol of the formula (II) is used in an amount of from 1 up to 3 moles per mole of nitrile of the formula (II), the reaction is carried out in the presence of a solvent, inert under the reaction conditions, selected from the group consisting of methyl tert-butyl ether, diethyl ether, tetrahydrofuran, dioxane, ethylene glycol dimethyl ether, toluene, hexane, heptane, dichloromethane and chlorobenzene.

15. (New) The process of claim 11, wherein the nitrile of the formula (II) is converted using an alcohol/water/HCl mixture which is obtained by passing HCl gas into a mixture of water and alcohol, or by passing HCl gas into a solution of alcohol and aqueous HCl, or by passing HCl gas into alcohol with subsequent dilution with water, and optionally adjusting the desired molar ratio in the alcohol/water/HCl mixture by diluting the aqueous, alcoholic HCl solution present with alcohol and/or water and the HCl gas used is an offgas from the conversion of a benzyl cyanide of the formula (IV) to the corresponding nitrile of the formula (II), and optionally intermediately storing HCl which is obtained as offgas in the preparation of the nitrile of the formula (II) in the form of the alcohol/water/HCl mixture.

16. (New) The process of claim 11, wherein the corresponding alkyl 2,2-dichloro-phenylacetates of the formula (I) are isolated by adding water so that the precipitated ammonium chloride is just dissolved and a phase separation occurs, whereupon, optionally after extraction of the aqueous phase, water, alcohol and any extractant present are initially distilled out of the organic phase at atmospheric pressure and a maximum temperature of 90 °C, and subsequently by-products under reduced pressure until a constant boiling temperature is attained, so that the corresponding alkyl 2,2-dichloro-phenylacetate of the formula (I) remains in the residue which may optionally be distilled overhead for further purification, or whereupon, optionally after extraction of the aqueous phase, the water is first removed from the organic phase on a water

separator and alcohol and any extractant present are subsequently distilled off at atmospheric pressure.

17. (New) The process of claim 16, wherein the crude alkyl 2,2-dichloro-phenylacetate of the formula (I), in the case that it contains too much organic acid, is admixed with an extractant selected from the group consisting of hexane, heptane, toluene, ethers and esters and the corresponding alcohol of the formula (III) and again worked up distillatively.